

## Halo Jarhead Chapter 10

by Cursed Saint

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Summary: Knight Company encounters a new enemy which has wiped out two companies.

## Halo Jarhead Chapter 10

### \*\*Chapter 10:\*\*

It had been almost a year since Sykes left Reach, but unlike normal he was feeling nostalgic for the planet. For years he had come and gone and not felt much of anything for the planet, no matter how long it was considered his personal residence he never felt like it was home. But he had learned that marriage had changed that. Sykes pulled out the picture that he had received four months ago; it was a picture of Natalie holding their young son Tomas. He was a mirror image of the Lieutenant at that age and he knew there was no denying that this child was his. He and Natalie had agreed to name him Tomas Lester Sykes, after both of their fathers. Something about looking at this picture made Sykes feel weak, and the worst part is that he knew what it was that made him feel that way. He now had an Achilles Heel and was vulnerable.

This issue had not yet affected his abilities to do his duty however, and given the fact that he always put his fear to the back of his mind made it so that he probably would never let it show. He also wondered if having a child in this time was crueler than anything else he could ever do. Although many liked to be optimistic it was even more obvious now that they were failing to keep ground from the Covenant. Every time they delivered a large blow to the enemy on the ground the fleet above would glass the planet. Sykes had seen his marines used as extraction teams not defenders. And that made plenty of sense, once the Covenant knew where a planet was they would send armada after armada to destroy it and all the life that it held. Sykes feared that the future his son would inherit would be nonexistent.

"\_Lieutenant Sykes?" Captain Wallace's voice said over Sykes' ear

bud.

"Yes Sir?" The Lieutenant replied as he placed the picture back in his pocket under his chest armor.

"\_The\_\_ Colonel is on the line for us and he has an emergency to report, so double time it over here with Fujita.\_" Wallace said with strain on his voice.

"Yes Sir. Will report in two minutes." Sykes stood from his kneeling position and tapped his microphone as he walked to his warthog.  
"Lieutenant Fujita?"

"\_Sir?\_" Fujita's voice said over the Com.

"Meet me at the road we are needed at C and C."

"\_Yes Sir on my way.\_" Fujita said as he snapped off the COM.

"Cools your in-charge until I return." Sykes said to his platoon subordinate as he climbed into the vehicle and accelerated away before the man could answer.

Sykes met the Second Lieutenant at the designated location and they proceeded to Command and Control. Fujita had shown that he was very competent in combat since they had left Reach, and the man's tactical knowledge only seemed to grow with every engagement. The only thing that Sykes saw wrong with how the man conducted himself was that he wasn't detached enough from his men. If he needed to he couldn't decide who lived and who died. But that was also something that Sykes had had a hard time deciding on when it came to Oasis and his extraction Op. Fujita would make a fine CO one day if only he learned how to sacrifice one for the good of the many.

Sykes stopped the Warthog in front of the tent and walked in with Fujita in toe. Captain Wallace was standing at the main view screen and Colonel Sable was being shown on its surface. Sykes and Fujita stopped and saluted the two. "At ease." Wallace said, as he didn't bother to turn around. The Captain was a good officer with a flair for the insane strategies and enough balls and intelligence to make them work. The man had proven to Sykes that without a doubt he was a Bad Ass the likes of which he had never seen outside of the Helljumpers.

"\_Good, now that everyone is here we can begin. Two hours ago Hellfire Company reported that they were under attack by an unknown Covenant unit of substantial size and strength. Thirteen minutes later the whole company went dark. We dispatched air support that reported no living marines at that location; whatever hit them killed all of them. Then thirty minutes later we received a message from Avalanche Company that they too were under attack from a unit of a similar description and while much like Indigo they have gone quiet. The reason why this worries me so much is because either the Covenant has two of these things or they have one that is highly mobile given the fact that the two companies were on different sides of our defenses. The reason why I am telling you this is because your strategic location leads us to believe that you are the next target. After running the numbers we know that whatever this thing is it's coming for you and that's why we want you to retreat from your position.\_" Sable said as he looked off screen towards one of his

aids.

"Sir, I must protest." Wallace said obviously pissed off at the prospect of having to leave his strategically superior location. "Sir with your permission I would like to remain and fight this thing."

"\_Negative Captain, I don't want to lose another company.\_" Sable said biting his lower lip.

"Sir with all due respect it is better that we remain and fight this enemy and learn its identity and transmit our knowledge of it, than it is to run and get killed by a ghost. Am I correct in saying that SatCom has failed to lock on to this unit?"

"\_Yes Captain that is correct.\_"

"Well Sir. Focus the cameras on us. We know it's coming why not at least get a look at the bastard?"

"\_Alright Captain, but if you get the slightest hint that it's going to destroy your company you call in an air strike.\_" Sable said as he rubbed his chin. "\_Sable\_\_ Out.\_"

Wallace turned to Sykes and Fujita and stuck a cigar in his mouth. "Sykes take your platoon to the eastern rock face and hunker down. Fujita you have the west and I'll take the south. This bastard is going to walk right into a cultasack of death, and we are going to be the ones doing the killing this time."

"Yes sir." Sykes and Fujita answered in unison.

"Dismissed." The Captain said as he lit his cigar and grabbed his rifle from the rack.

Sykes and Fujita ran out to the warthog and jumped in it and taking off as fast as possible. Sykes stopped at the third platoon's location and let Fujita out. "Best of luck Lieutenant." Sykes said as he hit the accelerator and saw the young Lieutenant nod. Sykes got to his platoons location as fast as he could and as soon as he arrived he started the move up to the high ground. Their location was ideal for a medieval fortress, a set of cliffs created a crescent shape and the three platoons would take up such a position on the high ground that the enemy would be trapped if they dared to enter. From a strategic view it was a nightmare for any ground force, they would need heavy air support the likes of which even the covenant would have trouble calling down in such a situation.

Whatever this new unit was it was about to meet its destroyer.

Sykes lined his platoon up on the cliff and spread them out and gave them as much rock cover as possible. This threat was unknown and the way to kill it was just as much a mystery, one that Sykes planned to answer. He had his snipers set up looking in grids so as to have a visual warning when the enemy approached, but the thick jungle which had kept the unit hidden during the other assaults was so thick that the odds of seeing it before it struck were slim. Sykes had gathered up as many rockets as possible, although he didn't know what he was fighting he felt it had to be something of higher ability than the wraith tank, which the best counter weapon, aside from a scorpion,

was rockets. Sykes really wished he had at least one of Natalie's experimental lasers, it's the only weapon he had ever used to take down a wraith with one shot and the only time he had seen it done without the use of a carpet bomb or nuke.

He wasn't comfortable with how often she came to his mind while he was in combat, it was something that drew his attention away from the combat and when fighting the Covenant even the slightest distraction could kill him. Or worse kill his whole platoon. The sound of the tanks rolling into position on either side of the road could be heard echoing through the whole area as all the marines got into position. The tanks were placed in such a way where they had a high vantage point and some boulders on either side of them, the boulders limited the angles of fire that could be delivered but not enough to where it mattered. Like every weapon in the marine arsenal Sykes had been trained on the tank and knew that a decent shot should be able to tattoo any enemy unit from half a mile away without much trouble, which meant that this enemy should be as good as down; with a Covenant space craft being the only exception given the energy shields. But given the fact that the UNSC Fleet was in orbit it was highly unlikely that one could just sneak up on them.

Sykes grabbed his Data Pad and brought up a map of the canyon with green dots symbolizing all the allied units of Knight Company. According to this they were almost completely ready as every inch of the wall was accounted for by some sort of weapon or marine. There was only one threat that they couldn't prepare for and that was the unknown. Since this threat in essence was exactly that, it made Sykes that much more agitated; he knew how to take down a grunt, a Jackal, Banshee's, Ghosts, Wraith's, and even a rough idea of how to take down a spirit and an inkling of what it took to kill an elite. This however was where they became the ones to find the Achilles heel or die trying, and that was scary.

Fear was something he hadn't felt since the Insurrectionist wars, back when he had something to go home to or rather the last time he had a home to go back to. He remembered what one of his old Sergeants had once said, \_ "The actions of a marine are justified by the lives he saved by taking a life, even if that life be his own." \_That made him feel better for some reason and it made sense why, they were here to evacuate the last population pockets who had survived the Covenant invasion.

Sykes tapped the shoulder of one of his young Private's who was shaking. "It will be alright son, just remember your training and follow my orders and you will make it through this." The young man shook his head and sat a little easier, Sykes only wished he could do the same. A loud sound ripped through the jungle and the whole canyon went quiet listening to the sounds, they were mechanical and loud. Sykes recognized the sounds as being similar to the sound of exoskeleton's while in motion, it was a common sound given the hydraulics and the amount of weight that it picked up. But Exoskeletons only made enough noise to where they would be heard within a few hundred yards, this was echoing and from the first sound that could be heard it would have to be more than a mile into the deep jungle. Two possibilities went through Sykes' mind. Either the covenant hadn't mastered Hydraulics on the level of humanity, which was highly unlikely given their Anti-gravity control. Or this thing was big enough to where its motion could be heard from such a distance. Knowing the Covenant the latter was the most likely and he

knew it, and that spoke volumes to their technology.

Captain Wallace quickly established the link with SatCOM and requested a thermal sweep of the area, which quickly came back nil. The canopy was just too high and too thick, that was unfortunate for Wallace who had volunteered his company for this job of identifying an unknown enemy threat. Sure he had faced similar situations in the past but each one was at the cost of a team or a squad, never a company. Wallace brought up a map layout of the canyon and found everyone was in place and ready to spring the trap.

Wallace had been lucky, he was given command of a company that was trained beyond normal standards and was used to operating in those situations. That made it that much easier for him to lead them on his missions which many had thought to be impossible, but that was his style being a miracle worker was what he did and how he earned his bones. He had a company trained by a former helljumper who had taught them everything he could; weather it was tactics, endurance training, or proper shooting. He had been blessed to have Sykes aboard as his XO; nothing had shown it more than the exercise on Reach where they handed it to the ODS platoons. Sykes was an offensive marine and as long as he had a strong defensive platform to move off of, then he would be nearly unstoppable. The only problem was that Wallace was such a marine and as he wished the best for his Lieutenant he also wanted the glory, instead of being the shield to Sykes' sword.

Lieutenant Fujita on the other hand was a raw officer. Unfamiliar with the realities of combat the man was a large slab of stone which Wallace and Sykes had both been gradually chiseling into an officer. Fujita was very good at taking orders and was learning to give them as his backbone had begun to develop, but as Wallace saw it he would be better off in an office pushing papers. However the war didn't leave that job for many, normally it was only given to those who were rich or had been injured beyond the point where they could be sent back with a prosthetic. Fujita would make a fine officer if only he could learn to lead, and that was the easiest way he could put it.

The COM cracked with the two taps the signal from Sykes. "Go ahead Lieutenant." Wallace said calmly into the COM.

"Sir we have a visual contact." \_ Sykes replied.

"Where?" Wallace said as he saw the large green light from within the jungle. "Is that the contact?" Wallace said as he grabbed a spotting scope and zoomed in on the target.

"Yes Sir. Awaiting your orders." \_

The Green light stood at least twenty feet off the ground and it seemed to move in a strange manner that coincided with the mechanical sounds that were reverberating through the canyon. Whatever this was it was big and quite possibly too big for a carpet bob to drop it. "Prep all weapons, we have incoming."

As Sykes watched the green light he realized it was moving and growing larger, it wasn't until he got a side view that he realized what he was looking at. "Sir it's a fuel rod shot." Sykes then heard the indication sound of the company COM channel open. "\_Everyone find

cover and brace yourselves\_." Wallace said over the COM. Sykes watched as his platoon started to group together behind the various boulders and indentations in the wall that was to their backs, Sykes took one last look at the plasma as it closed in on their location. It was larger than any Fuel Rod shot he had ever seen and he knew from what he had been briefed about the fuel rod that the shot's size and intensity was based on the size of the gun that was firing it which was exactly why a fuel rod gun's shot was different from other covenant weapons. That being the case Sykes was able to assume that the weapon causing this shot would have to be enormous by comparison to the shot, which was already showing its size. Sykes crouched down next to a few Privates who were huddled behind a bolder but he removed his fiber optics tube and watched from around the corner as the fuel rod shot hit the cliff and began to rake across it from right to left. The stone that it came into contact with immediately melted and began to flow down the rock face leaving a gap in the wall that was large enough for a man to stand in, luckily however it didn't seem to affect the stability of the cliff as it slowly raked across the position.

Sykes immediately saw that this was not their biggest concern; although it was more than dangerous, the thing they had to worry about was what had fired this deadly shot. He turned his optical tube and watched where the green line of plasma was coming from, and as he felt the tremors of the shot as it moved closer and closer to his position he saw a giant mechanical leg walk out of the jungle followed by another which then brought the front of the enemy unit into view. It looked like a giant bug covered in shining blue armor with glowing green eyes. "Captain look where the shot is coming from." Sykes said after frantically establishing a link to Wallace, he sounded like he was whispering in an armament factory and expecting him to be able to hear it, the shot was leveled on the Lieutenants position and plasma tended to cause static.

"\_Say again Sykes?" \_Wallace said over the now clearing COM channel.

"Sir look at the tree line." Sykes said frantically.

"\_What the hell is that?"\_ Wallace said.

"I don't know sir, but may I suggest we send a volley of rockets and scorpion rounds into it to test its vulnerability?"

"\_I agree Lieutenant, are your men in place?"\_

"They will be momentarily sir. I'll signal when they are in place, what about Fujita?"

"\_He's nearly in position."\_

"Roger." Sykes turned to his platoon. "Rockets on the side, snipers protect the rockets in case we have any small arms fire. Shoot at the bug and try to squash it." Sykes watched as his men got into position and he received a nod from Master Sergeant Cools, the signal that they were ready. Sykes tapped his COM three times and he heard the Captains shuddering British voice shout through the COM, "\_Now\_". The Covenant behemoth was instantly surrounded by the rockets and shots from the two scorpion tanks; there was a great deal of smoke that obscured the visual contact for three seconds. The sounds however

continued and when those three seconds had elapsed the enemy unit walked right through unphased by what had just hit it. It walked right into the cultasack of death which was the only thing preventing it from walking onto the plateau and killing thousands. Sykes managed to get a grip of what he was looking at as he examined closer watching the monster come closer. He looked and saw that it had enemy units on its back which also supported some sort of glowing tail, there appeared to be a series of tunnel like walkways on the back of the bug and on the side Sykes could see a plasma turret as it began to fire away. "Get down." He shouted to his men who were on the cliff still amazed at the fact that the bug wasn't even scratched. Half of them snapped out of it instantly and fell on their guts and slid backwards and the few stragglers were quickly pulled over backwards barely with enough time to save them from the sporadic plasma fire.

Sykes saw that Fujita's lines were being hit by plasma fire as well and he also noticed that the large fuel rod was powering up for another shot. Just as he examined this he heard the roar of a warthog over the open COM. "\_Cover me boys, were gonna take this thing down from the inside out." \_ The Captain's voice was unmistakable, and Sykes quickly turned his attention to the warthog as it barreled down the steep hill at full speed Chain-gun blazing and a rocketeer riding shotgun.

Sykes leapt to his feet and began shouting out orders. "Snipers clear the landing, rockets and riflemen clear the side decks. Give him the best shot we can." Just as Sykes rattled off these orders Captain Wallace hit the cliffs slight rise and jumped his warthog off of the ground and onto the bugs back smashing an elite upon landing. The Captain jumped out of the driver's seat and raised his shotgun to the stunned grunts, but he never got the chance to fire as the snipers picked them all off clearing the deck. The Captain looked to where he figured Sykes was and tipped his hat, he moved with his two comrades down a side ramp in unison taking out three grunts who stood on the side.

By this time Sykes had signaled the rockets to stop as he watched through the scope of a Sniper rifle. The Captain walked back into sight with the other two marines and went to round the corner when he turned back and looked back at Sykes. "\_It looks like this thing doesn't have an accessible cockpit. But we found something that looks like a generator."\_ Wallace said as Sykes zoomed in on him.

"Well sir, maybe we could blow the generator and it would kill the threat or at least neutralize theâ€¦| Sir I saw movement behind you." Sykes said, as he looked closer at the distortion. It then revealed itself to be what Sykes was afraid of as the plasma sword impaled Captain Wallace through the abdomen. "Noâ€¦|" Sykes screamed as he fired four shots into the cloaked elite, which quickly lost its shield and fell to the shots. Sykes turned and saw two grunts turn the side turret to shoot the two marines who had their backs turned trying to figure out what had just happened. Sykes screamed through the COM as he reached for another magazine from the sniper he had taken the weapon from, but his words fell short as he watched the grunts cut down the two marines who were just beginning to turn back. Sykes fired two well-placed shots taking down the two grunts.

He heard Fujita over the COM screaming in hysteria. "Sir what are we going to do?"

"Pull it together marine, stay focused on the current problem." Sykes said trying to steady both the Second Lieutenant and himself.

"But Sir, how are we going to take this thing down?" Fujita said only slightly showing that he was gaining some composure.

Sykes opened up a link to Battalion Command. "Col. Sable."

"\_Sykes? Where the hell is Wallace?" \_Sable said over the COM.

"He is dead Sir. And I am assuming command."

"\_Acknowledged"\_ Sable said in a low tone.

"Sir I am requesting the Long Sword Carpet Bomb and reinforcements if you have them."

"\_Roger that son, hold on the lightning is about to strike."\_

The Long Sword designated Lightning 17 was the pride of its pilot Lieutenant Jason Crowley. Crowley was an ace who had survived several engagements with the enemy and was regarded by many as the best pilot in the squadron; this mission was just like so many that he had received on this miserable planet. A carpet bomb run was easy and since his Sword moved so fast he had yet to see a Covenant anti-air weapon that could catch him. "In position to initiate Bombing Run, requesting permission to begin run." He had been flying around the area for some time waiting for the order, and from the status check that he had received only moments prior he had a feeling it was almost time for him to lay down his payload.

The COM cracked and an unfamiliar voice spoke over it. "\_Permission granted Lightning 17 uploading targeting DATA now, hit 'em hard Flyboy." \_The COM went silent and Crowley responded quickly. "Roger Sir, tell the Jarheads to hold onto their Asses. The lightning's about to strike." The Lieutenant looked at the data that was being shown on his monitor of his target, the thing looked unfathomable, as he had never seen such a thing on the ground as he saw the warthog next to the moving craft he realized the true scale. He wasn't worried though he had the advantage, he was a flyer. He turned off the weapons safeties and dove at an eighty-degree angle, just another day at the office.

Sykes watched the craft move as it tried to get a lock on his marines, whenever it began to charge its weapon he would order the Scorpions to fire shots into its side drawing its attention and keeping it from firing. The position they had chosen for the tanks was perfect, keeping them as high as they did and behind boulders provided cover for the small targets the enemy attempted to shoot. Sykes had noticed that they had managed to do some damage to the walker as he noticed one of its legs was missing its armor plate which covered its joint. It was the type of thing that would give a rookie hope of victory, like breaking through the covenant shields in space. It was a small achievement but it might be what gave the proper opportunity to strike and win. Sykes theorized that those were easily the most vulnerable to attack as they were thin and built to move with the monster. That didn't matter though all they were doing was trying to survive while their air support dropped enough explosives to make a mountain into a plateau.



Sykes heard the whine of the Long Sword as it came into view at a steep angle and leveled out at a low altitude. "Here it comes, everybody down." Sykes said over the COM. The Sword was flying faster than he had ever seen at such an altitude, and the fact it wasn't wavering meant that the pilot had to be skilled.

Sykes took a look at the covenant walker and was surprised to see it doing something new, it turned what was on its back and faced the object directly at the incoming bird. Sykes pulled up his pistol and zoomed in on the object as he saw it begin to glow brighter and brighter. Sykes smacked his throat so hard it hurt as he hailed the pilot. "Lightning 17, lookout it has anâ€¦" The enemy weapon fired five plasma bursts on an intercept course with the long sword. The marines rose from their cover in amazement as the plasma bolts rocketed towards the friendly craft.

Sykes watched as the pilot spun to the right and tried to gain altitude but he didn't calculate the size of the plasma correctly as it tore through his starboard wing and sent him into a spin that ended with a crash into the jungle. Sykes raised the Colonel and reported the situation as the Bug continued to turn in circles firing randomly at different positions. Sykes felt more pangs of fear as he thought about his family back on Reach, but he quickly dismissed the feelings as he heard the Colonel order him to retreat.

"Negative, Sir." Sykes replied to his Commanding Officer.

"\_Sykes if you don't retreat from your position you will all be dead.\_" The Colonel replied in a stern tone.

"Sir, if we attempt to retreat this thing will burn us alive before we can get off of the canyon. We only have one chance to take this thing out now, and I would like a chance at it."

"\_What's your plan Son?\_" Sable said realizing the reality of his previous order.

"Its legs are weak sir. I'm betting that we can take down its mobility by striking at its joints. If nothing more it should soften it up for another Long Sword attack."

"\_Permission granted. Good luck son. Sable out.\_"

Sykes turned to Master Sergeant Cools who was standing next to him behind the large boulder. "Get whatever Rockets we have left on the cliff and prepare to fire at the leg joints." Sykes said and Cools gave a simple nod as reply. Sykes tapped his throat twice as he called up both Lieutenant Fujita and Master Sergeant Rhodes. "Fujita get all of your rockets to the cliff and fire at the leg joints. Rhodes you do the same and aim the Scorpion's at the same target. We're gonna break its legs so it can't follow us."

Both Rhodes and Fujita replied simultaneously over the COM almost washing each other out with the simple response. "\_Roger.\_" Two minutes passed and Sykes saw from his data pad that everyone was in position; he tapped his mic three times the signal for status check. He heard three taps a pause and three more. The other platoons were ready and now it was time. "Fire at will." Sykes said over the COM.

All at once several rockets streaked through the air and collided with the legs. Some missed but the majority hit their marks. Sykes watched closely and determined that it took at least five rockets to take out the light armor over the joints. The Lieutenant watched as the giant fuel rod blasted on members of his platoon's location sending some of them flying back into the wall and the rest vaporized by the blast. Sykes bared his teeth and ran over to the position policing a rocket launcher that he saw on the ground, he ran up to the edge and saw that the armor around the joints was all removed and he emptied his rocket tubes as the bug looked right at him. The Scorpion's fired on the same leg as the bug started to turn away from Sykes, the first shot hit the leg followed by a rocket then the second shot.

Sykes dropped the empty launcher as he watched the walker's leg buckle and tuck underneath its body. The giant began to teeter and started to fall right towards the Lieutenants position; Sykes pulled out his pistol and smirked as he waited for the monsters collision. It reminded him of something he had learned to do in the Helljumpers, it had seemed rather impractical at the time since they were the ones who dropped but it was all part of the training for the unknown that they always faced. Sykes heard the COM blast in his ear as several voices screamed at him to move, but he wasn't worried the angle was on his side. The bug smashed into the cliff sending a wall of dust and rock flying as it hit the wall it sent itself back onto its other legs and it gradually eased itself to the ground in a crouched position.

As the dust cleared Singer and Cools saw that the Lieutenant wasn't there, they quickly checked the ground below the cliff but too much of the wall had crumbled to the ground along with the marine officer. If he was down there he was covered in three tons of rock and dirt.

The Bug began to rise again and Singer raised her Rocket launcher and Zoomed in on the walker, she had a clear shot on one of its legs but as she prepared to pull the trigger she saw a marine in olive green pushing himself up from his stomach. Singer quickly tapped her mic and screamed for the company to hold fire, as she pointed out the contact to the Master Sergeant who quickly pulled up his rifle and zoomed in on the target. As he did his electronic scope registered the contact IFF as being one First Lieutenant W. Sykes.

Sykes pushed himself up off of the overgrown alloy plated insect and as his right leg took weight he immediately collapsed back to the deck. His knee was spaziming, he saw the robotic movements in the synthetic joint; he pushed himself up again and put his left leg under him. He drew his pistol and began to limp across the deck. Just then the voices all began to crack across the COM, but Cools was the one he could hear the clearest.

"\_Sir, what's your status?\_" Cools said calmly.

"Slight limp nothing serious." Sykes lied, he could feel the shooting pain that came along with a fractured femur and the twitching was causing even more pain. "Just keep the snipers watching my back and I'll burn down the house."

"\_Yes sir. We have your six, Gamma Lima.\_" Cools replied. Wishing his

CO good luck.

Sykes observed his surroundings as he felt the walker continue to move underneath him. He noticed a plasma pistol sitting on the walkway and grabbed it placing it on his belt as he continued to walk down the ramp. Sykes slowly rounded the corner and saw the countless dead covenant bodies, and next to a grunt lay six plasma grenades bound together by a bandolier. Sykes quickly reached down and grabbed the explosives and thanked the fact that the rockets hadn't detonated them. He then rounded another corner and found the body of Captain Wallace and the elite that Sykes had shot dead after it had impaled the Captain. Sykes turned and saw the bright lights that flashed before him; not knowing exactly what he was looking at he fired a round at the glowing compartment. The bullet was instantly absorbed and disintegrated, this was a force shield.

Sykes holstered his side arm and realized that in this case the plasma pistol was the best option. He removed it from his belt and held the firing mechanism as he set it to overcharge, an action which could knock out any covenant shield that he knew of but this was most likely powered on a whole different scale.

Sykes discharged the pistol and the force shield flashed off for two seconds then came back up with a lighter glow to it. Sykes overcharged the pistol again and fired the green blob of energy into the shield again. The shield dropped and he could now distinguish what appeared to be a primary system, which had been protected by the shield. Sykes removed his four grenades and placed them next to the object he then removed the bandolier of grenades from his shoulder and placed all but one next to the frags. He looked over the edge and watched as the walker continued to turn and changing what he was looking at, it was like a twentieth century carnival ride, if such rides were capable of delivering death to thousands with a simple motion. Sykes watched intently as his view shifted from a series of boulders, to a rock face, to solid earth. Sykes tapped his mic. "I need rocket fire on the front of the walker ASAP." All he received in response was a series of taps over the COM.

Rockets streaked across the air and impacted the front of the walker. It then stopped its aimless firing and dizzying turning and faced its threat. Sykes felt the motion stop and looked down one last time seeing solid ground beneath him. He tapped his mic again. "Find cover." Sykes primed the grenade and threw it on the pile he had set next to the mechanism, he then jumped off the walker and began to fall the two stories to the ground.

Once he hit the ground he lost his balance and smacked his head on the ground knocking him out cold. The walker then proceeded to close the distance on the location of the several rockets that had just impacted its front. The plasma grenade began to glow brighter and brighter until it finally detonated. The walker stopped in its tracks as it began to sink to the ground as its hydraulics began to give out, it touched down and began to spark along the length of the craft as bolts of lightning arced from one end to the other and some sort of a siren went off. The marines looked on from their positions and saw as the nightmare that had claimed the life of their Commander exploded into a pile of rubble and purple fire.

"Knight Company, I repeat what's the situation, over?" Col. Sable's voice said sternly through Sykes' earpiece as he shook off his

unconscious state. He rolled over onto his stomach and saw the burning remains of the walker setting a hundred yards from where he just was laying. Sykes tapped his mic, "Sir, we are clear." He responded coolly.

\_"But what about that walker son." \_

"Well sir, there isn't much left of it. But I can probably find you a souvenir if you want one." Sykes replied as he struggled to rise to his feet.

\_"Son I don't know how the hell you did it, but drinks are on me. I'm on my way out right now with the pelicans. ETA fifteen minutes." \_

"Acknowledged." Sykes said as he began to limp toward the rest of his company. After five yards he tapped his mic again. "Fujita?"

\_"Yes Sir\_" Fujita replied crisply with a hint of joy in his voice.

"For the time being you are in command. Send me a medic and a ride, and meet me at the tent."

"Yes sir" glad you made it sir." Fujita said as he snapped off the channel. Sykes eased himself down and settled on the ground as he waited for the warthog, he removed his helmet and propped it under his head and let his eyes shut for a moment. Today had been one hell of a day and all he wanted to do was jump back in a cryo-tube and be on his way home.

Sykes moved slowly as he dismounted the warthog and walked toward the command tent. He had a crutch under his arm and his leg had been splinted so as to prevent any more damage, the medic had patched him up as best he could but some serious surgery would be needed in order to fix the leg. All Sykes hoped for was that this time they wouldn't go the cheap rout and that they might replace it with a flash cloned replacement. He limped towards the door where Lieutenant Fujita and Sergeant Major Billings greeted him.

"Sir," the two said as they snapped crisp salutes.

"At ease. I'm too damn tired to return your salutes so I hope you will forgive me." Sykes said as he walked into the tent. He found a chair and sat down slowly and cautiously as he let his injured leg stay straight. "I always hated the adrenaline downfall." He said referring to what happened when an adrenaline rush had run its course. "So what's the status of the company?"

"Sir, we lost a total of seventeen. And we have twenty-three wounded with various severity of burns, but all are stable."

"Good, we could have lost a lot more, we were damn lucky." Sykes said as he was handed a cup of coffee by Billings. He took a gulp and looked out the open tent window. "I want you to pull all of the Tac Cam data and send it to my data pad. I doubt that we have seen the last of this bug, and I'm sure our friends at ONI would love a complete report."

Sykes downed the rest of the hot liquid in one gulp as he heard the

sound of a pelican drop ship lowering to their position. Less than a minute later Col. Sable walked in with a slight smirk on his face. Sykes struggled to try and stand to give the Colonel a proper salute but the Colonel shook his head and grabbed a chair and sat next to him. "Don't stand on my account son. It's been one hell of a day, and you just saved thousands of lives."

"Thank you sir." Sykes said as he stared into the Colonel's eyes. "What about the other companies?"

Sable's head lowered as he remembered the two companies that had encountered the walker first. "Hellfire was wiped out. Avalanche has a few dozen left."

"Two companies, one walker. Barely seems worth it."

"It's the way of the war. Well listen, we are mounting up and getting the hell off this rock. The fight up topside isn't going as well as it did here. We will discuss everything else aboard the Vulcan."

Sykes breathed easy as he realized that this bloody fight was finally over, this was the pain of command, which had made him hate his position so much. And now that Wallace was dead, it was doubtful his job was going to get any easier.

End  
file.